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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PREF](#) [PHUM](#) [SU](#)
SUBJECT: DARFURI MILLIONAIRE PHILANTHROPIST DISCUSSES MODEL
VILLAGES, DARFUR CONFERENCE, AND FORCED ALLEGIANCE TO NCP

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY. On June 27, Darfuri millionaire entrepreneur Sadiq Adam Abdullah (aka Sadiq Widaa') told poloff in London that his successful investment in his hometown of Kalimendo, North Darfur can serve as a model for development in all of Darfur. Widaa' encouraged the CDA and USAID Mission Director to visit this region with his support, though he cautioned, "the Government will not want you to go, as they want to take credit for everything - they don't want you to see what is possible." Widaa' also discussed his active involvement with Darfur's rebel, civil society, and janjaweed leaders, proposing to host an independent conference for 100 of them in London in three to four months. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) BIONOTE: Real estate developer and entrepreneur Sadiq Widaa' is one of the wealthiest businessmen to come from Darfur. He resides in London where he oversees a number of businesses and substantial properties, including Curzon Place Properties. He also has investments in France, Switzerland, Dubai, Egypt and Sudan. Widaa' met with CDA Fernandez in his last visit to Sudan in July 2007. Shortly after on July 31, local newspapers reported that Widaa' pledged his allegiance to the National Congress Party, something Widaa' states he was forced into by leaders of the regime such as Presidential Advisor Dr. Nafie Ali Nafie.

KALIMENDO AS A MODEL FOR DARFUR

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¶3. (U) Widaa' stated that he invested approximately 15 million USD in Kalimendo in health, education, agricultural, and general infrastructure projects. According to Widaa', despite many logistical and governmental hurdles, the project has succeeded and Kalimendo can serve as an example for the wider region. For example, Widaa' noted that he drilled over ten wells in the region, which have supplemented rain fed agriculture and changed the way people live and work. Widaa' argued that there are areas stable enough for similar development in other parts of Darfur and stated that poverty is one of the core causes of the conflict. Without looking past immediate humanitarian aid to development, the conflict will never be resolved, said Widaa'. Poloff questioned whether disproportionate development could skew the settling patterns of returning IDPS, encourage banditry, and attract rebels. Widaa' responded that while these are all possibilities, these phenomena have not occurred in Kalimendo and should not be taken as an excuse not to develop parts of Darfur.

¶4. (U) Widaa' requested that the USAID Mission Director and CDA visit Kalimendo as soon as possible, promising that he could help provide helicopter transport. He said he would not be able to return to Darfur in the near future as "there are some political problems that prevent me from traveling there for now." He stated that "The GoS will not want you to see Kalimendo as it is an example of how Darfur's problems might be solved." He added, "the Government wants to take credit for everything and they will not want you to see what is possible."

THREATENED BY THE REGIME

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15. (SBU) Widaa' stated that he is not "a political man," and that the GoS is scared of wealthy individuals from Darfur. According to Widaa', the government "co-opted my work and Dr. Nafie and others in the regime forced me to pledge my allegiance to them, threatening that otherwise they would destroy my investment." Widaa' stated that Sudan will never be stable if "it remains in the shadow of the NCP."

FOCUS ON UNIFICATION, SAYS "FRIEND OF THE MOVEMENTS"

16. Widaa' stated that he is "a friend of the movements" who sees a real possibility of unifying the rebels soon. (Note: Some observers have accused Widaa' of funding rebel movements. End Note.) He stated that he was in Abuja during the DPA negotiations and sees a real change in the environment between then and now. Widaa' stated that he believes that the U.S. can play an important role in unifying the movements. Widaa' added that although he has respect for the movements, he believes that most of their leaders are not qualified to be political leaders, and need to be told that.

POSSIBLE DARFUR CONFERENCE IN LONDON

17. (SBU) Widaa' said that he continues to be in communication with many of Darfur's important political players. He stated that he hosted a large dinner for many prominent Sudanese rebel leaders on June 26 and that he will continue to try to be a productive force in the region. He said that he plans to organize a conference for approximately 100 Darfur civil society representatives, rebel leaders, and Arab militiamen in three to four months in London. The government will not be invited to participate in this first meeting, stated Widaa'. Poloff raised the logistical and financial

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constraints of such a large conference, and stated that the AU/UN and international community could be valuable partners in such an endeavor. Widaa' said that the question of money should not be an issue, but that he would appreciate the involvement of the U.S. and the new chief mediator. Widaa' said that this initiative should be carried out in a very discrete way "as the GoS will try to undermine it." Widaa' stated that he is worried about the position of Minni Minnawi. "I know that some of the rebel leaders are rejoicing about Minni's move, but this is not a victory for them. If Minni goes back, that brings us back to the very beginning of this mess. This will encourage the movements and make them think that they can actually topple the government," stated Widaa'. Widaa' also said that he has been in communication with Abdul Wahid and Khalil Ibrahim, describing Ibrahim as "stuck in a tough place."

COMMENT

18. (SBU) Widaa' is a paradoxical figure. In the same breath he appears comfortable describing exclusive London properties and Darfur's wells. He commands deals worth millions, but struggled ordering coffee with his extremely limited command of English. He has publicly sworn to support the government, but privately condemns the regime.

19. (SBU) If he actually follows through on his grandiose plans, a private Darfur conference hosted, paid for, and organized by Widaa' could be useful if done sooner, rather than later. This initiative outside of Sudan could provide the rare opportunity of bringing the rebels and some of the community leaders they supposedly represent face to face, possibly in the presence of international observers. The timing may also be appropriate as it may take several months for the new chief mediator to get up and running. All of this, of course, should be conducted in coordination with the AU/UN, but would probably be more effective as an independent conference apart from official mediation efforts. Widaa' does not appear to understand the intricacies of the international community's involvement in Sudan nor the larger questions of political maneuvering that will be required for any final resolution to Darfur's problems. Nonetheless, Widaa's nonpartisan, pragmatic, and "can-do" approach to Darfur is refreshing and should be encouraged, especially if he is willing to bankroll independent initiatives that have the advantage of coming from a Darfuri rather than the

international community.

FERNANDEZ